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WATERSHED AT LEAVENWORTH: DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER AND  
THE COMMAND AND GENERAL STAFF SCHOOL

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army  
Command and General Staff College in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree of

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by

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## 19. ABSTRACT (Continued)

This study is a historical analysis of Dwight Eisenhower's experience as a student at the 1925-26 Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. The study develops several themes of Eisenhower's life - competitiveness, individualism, use of others' talents, and problem-solving ability - and shows how they came into play during the year at Leavenworth. The study explores Eisenhower's preparation for the course, the extreme lengths which were required to gain him entrance, his motivation for excellence, his methods of study, his selection as honor graduate, and how the course prepared him for his future. The study explores the 100 years of development of the School prior to Eisenhower's attendance, with emphasis on the course and "the Leavenworth experience" as it existed for the school-year 1925-26.

The study investigates Eisenhower's relationship with his mentor General Fox Conner, the degree of competitiveness existing at the School in 1925-26, School doctrine and curriculum, and the living environment at Fort Leavenworth. The work explores Eisenhower's "partnership" study method with classmate Leonard Gerow, his use of George S. Patton's notes during the course, and the influence of School Commandant Edward L. King on the class.

Eisenhower's prior duty and assignments and extensive preparation were pivotal in his success, as was his high motivation to do well in the course. Despite supposedly anonymous class standings during the course, Eisenhower likely knew of his standing because of his close associations with instructors who were running a 'pool' on who would finish first. This knowledge may have spurred Eisenhower's especially strong finish - although it did not interfere with his practicing the game he discovered at Leavenworth - golf. The study corrects several factual errors perpetuated by biographers, while seeking to discern the reasons Ike would one day refer to his year at Leavenworth as "a watershed in my life."

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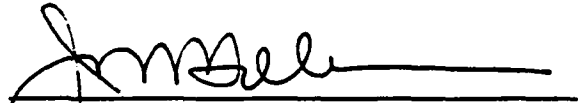
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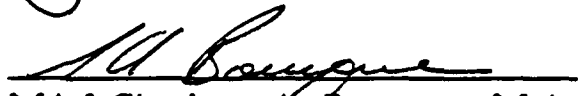
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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

## ABSTRACT

WATERSHED AT LEAVENWORTH : DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER AND  
THE COMMAND AND GENERAL STAFF SCHOOL, by Major  
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took on new meaning.

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## CHAPTER 1

# A YEAR IN THE LIFE - PERSPECTIVES

In May, 1926 Fort Leavenworth, Kansas entered its 100th year of existence. One month later - June 18th, 1926, to be exact - Dwight David Eisenhower would graduate from Ft. Leavenworth's Command and General Staff School en route to military and political responsibilities which would shape the world. "Ike," as he was known throughout his life, would lead the Allied Forces in the conquest of Germany, serve as Army Chief of Staff, and serve two terms as President of the United States. Leavenworth would have its share of distinguished graduates, but the accomplishments and contributions of Eisenhower are unparalleled to this day.

The year Eisenhower spent at Leavenworth was significant for what he learned at the School and the effects the experience had on him. Despite reference to Eisenhower's attendance at Command and General Staff School in virtually every biographical treatment of his life, analysis of his Leavenworth experience is incomplete. In addition, many accounts contain factual errors and interpretations that are often contradictory. His experience at the School deserves further scrutiny.

Eisenhower's year at Leavenworth can best be understood in the context of several themes which characterized his life. First, there was his inspired competitiveness and consistent concern with how he "was doing." Ike was a competitor and despite his likeability and basic humility he was committed to doing his best - especially when he sensed his best was required. To gloss over the obvious in this case is to miss something of the essence of the man. Eisenhower felt himself inspired; he felt his sense of duty deeply. Ike did not drift into supreme command or the presidency of the United States and he did not graduate first in his class at Leavenworth without the drive to do so. His sense of purpose and dedication is exhibited in many small things, masked, perhaps, by his essentially modest personality - and affability. What sort of

effort did Ike put forth at Leavenworth? How did he study? And, more importantly for some - "Did Ike play golf at Leavenworth?"

Second, there is his individualism. His "war with the War Department" is legendary. Ike was not a joiner, he spurned the study groups of Leavenworth. In a system that demands conformity, Ike was a rebel of sorts. His bouts with indiscipline at West Point would take a mature form in his bouts with established doctrine and the War Department's assignment logic later in his career.

Third, Ike had an uncanny ability to recognize talent in other people and harness it to enrich his endeavors. His ability to cultivate friends in high places would help him persevere in his travails with the War Department. Indeed, his entrance to the Command and General Staff School would come only through the efforts of Fox Conner, his friend and mentor. Ike made the right friends - some at Leavenworth - and impressed senior Army leaders who would place him in key positions of responsibility.

Fourth, Eisenhower was a pragmatist who learned how to get things done, including how to take tests. His willingness to study hard was surpassed only by his ability to study smart. What better way to traverse the Command and General Staff

School than with the aid of Patton's notes? Eisenhower preferred the untraditional approach to problem solving and if his superiors would frequently cite him for a lack of speed in his approach - so what? - he gained more by the circuitous route. Ike knew how Ike thought and by a series of mental testings - not the least of which was his success at Leavenworth - convinced himself that his processes were unique and invaluable.

Many of the themes of Eisenhower's life are evident from his memoirs, especially his book, *At Ease, Stories I Tell to Friends*. Written some forty years after the year at Leavenworth, the stories are sometimes self-serving and undoubtedly tinted by Eisenhower's interests as well as the passage of time. Yet the work has a certain believability - the tone of a man truly at ease with himself and his place in history. *At Ease* shows us the events of Eisenhower's life as he seems to see them himself. Often revealing, the work has become a point of departure for every Eisenhower biographer since its writing. *At Ease* gives us the events, and an interpretation. It also gives us the flaws and imperfections, the penchant for card-playing, the guilt, the frustrations, as well as the biographical corrections that Eisenhower feels compelled to

make. While the memoirs are certainly the departure point, they are not the full story. Army efficiency reports, interview files, and personal correspondence - much of which is on file at The Dwight D. Eisenhower Library in Abilene, Kansas - form a primary and indispensable wealth of information.

The Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas must also be understood if we are to gain a relevant perspective on Eisenhower's experience there. From this school, in one of its forms or another, graduated such noteables as George Marshall, Omar Bradley, George S. Patton, Jr., Matthew B. Ridgway, Mark Clark and Maxwell Taylor - men trained to understand a common language in war. Men who would assume the key military leadership positions of their time. How did the School evolve and what was its curriculum during the 1925-26 school year? Coming as one of the final years of the "competitive period" of the School, just how competitive was the 1925-26 class? Students were reported to have died during previous courses - some by suicide - and nervous breakdowns were a hazard of the experience. What of the skills and doctrine taught at the School during the critical inter-war period? Did it adequately prepare its officers for the challenges to come?

This study then, will examine Eisenhower's year at Leavenworth against the backdrop of the Command and General Staff School as it had evolved to the 1925-26 school year. It will do so within the context of the life of General Dwight D. Eisenhower, by focusing on his development prior to attending the School, on the School itself, on his year of attendance at the School, and on what the experience meant to Ike and his future. Ultimately, it will attempt to discern the reasons Ike would describe his year at Leavenworth as "a watershed in my life."<sup>1</sup>

## NOTE

1. Dwight D. Eisenhower, At Ease: Stories I Tell to Friends. (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., 1967), 197.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE ROAD TO LEAVENWORTH

At the age of eight, Eisenhower overheard his mother revealing her age to be thirty-six. Intrigued by the number, he calculated the year in which he would attain that age. The result was described as disheartening - "Nineteen-twenty-six was ridiculously far off, a whole lifetime in the future."<sup>1</sup>

Eisenhower spent the first half of 1926 at Fort Leavenworth - attending the Command and General Staff School. It is curious that Eisenhower recalled his eight year-old musings some sixty years later. Curious too that in those same musings he would recall "the only peak of my personal horizon would have been something like entering the halls of higher learning (the eighth grade)."<sup>2</sup>

There were several important family and community influences on the young Eisenhower leading him beyond his

town's typical eighth grade education - to West Point and then to Leavenworth. The themes that characterize the remainder of his life also develop in this early period, themes which will play in the Leavenworth watershed. The pre-Leavenworth experiences can be viewed in three periods - the formative years in Abilene, the West Point years, and the active-duty Army years.

### **The Formative Years**

Dwight David Eisenhower was born in Denison, Texas in 1890, the third of seven sons born to David and Ida Eisenhower. When Dwight was about two years old the family moved to Abilene, Kansas where his father worked at the local creamery. Among the poorer families in town, the Eisenhowers were members of a Christian church which opposed war and violence of any kind.

Ike describes his parents' relationship as a "genuine partnership" where "Father was the breadwinner, Supreme Court, and Lord High Executioner."<sup>3</sup> Eisenhower describes his mother as having the greater personal influence on the Eisenhower boys. She was the family manager and tutor who was able to invest the required time in the boys' development.

Ike's father worked long hours, six days a week, in order to make ends meet. If Ike's father was quick to judgment, he describes his mother as a "psychologist," dealing effectively with each son's "unique personality" and "adapting her methods to each."<sup>4</sup>

Eisenhower describes his early reading interests as fixated on ancient history to the neglect of other subjects. "The battles of Marathon, Zama, Salamis, and Cannae became as familiar to me as the games (and battles) I enjoyed with my brothers and friends. . . ."<sup>5</sup> Describing Hannibal as his childhood "favorite," Eisenhower reasons ". . . Hannibal always seemed to be an underdog, neglected by his government, and fighting during most of his active years in the territory of his deadly and powerful enemy."<sup>6</sup> Eisenhower also idealized George Washington and his accomplishments at Princeton, Trenton, and Valley Forge, citing his "stamina and patience in adversity" and "his indomitable courage, daring, and capacity for self-sacrifice."<sup>7</sup> "Of course," Eisenhower wrote of his youth, "I could read also about scholars and philosophers, but they seldom loomed so large in my mind as warriors and monarchs."<sup>8</sup> Perhaps it was his family's religious distaste for war which made the subject so enticing to the young Eisenhower. His

recollections of the Spanish-American War, which he gained from his uncle's descriptions at the age of seven, remained clear in his mind throughout his life. He took seriously the town rumours about the possibility of Spaniards bombarding American cities by air, once mistaking a large box kite for the mysterious crafts.<sup>9</sup>

Family learning was an important part of the Eisenhower regimen, with considerable effort invested in luring Ike toward the more traditional subjects of arithmetic, spelling and geography. This occasionally resulted in the securing of his historical classics so they would not provide too great a temptation. Reading of the Bible was a shared honor in the family, and reading errors were not tolerated.<sup>10</sup>

Quarters were close at the Eisenhower house - 818 feet for its eight occupants (one of the sons had died during infancy). Ike shared a bedroom with two brothers and slept in the same bed with his brother Roy. Ike apparently envied his eldest brother Arthur, whose 6 1/2 feet by 6 1/2 foot private room he regarded as "splendid isolation."<sup>11</sup>

Eisenhower recalls Abilene, Kansas as "peaceful, pastoral, and . . . happy," - a far cry from its earlier reputation as "the toughest, meanest, most murderous town in the

territory."<sup>12</sup> After the Civil War, Texas cattlemen had taken to driving their cattle into the town because it afforded the nearest railhead. With the cattlemen had come expansion, saloons, and a reputation for wildness. As the railroads extended west the town mellowed, taking on an almost serene quality during Ike's boyhood. Social distinctions within the town appeared to Ike to be few, "work" was the common denominator and folks were expected to do just that.<sup>13</sup>

While Kansans of the period were largely literate, school was intended to introduce students to civic responsibility and prepare them for the job opportunities of the period. Of the town's 200 children who joined Ike at grade school in 1897, only 67 entered Abilene High School in 1905, of which only 31 graduated.<sup>14</sup> The ability to write, spell, and work hard were the standards which Abilene demanded of its youth - graduation from high school was an accomplishment indeed.

Ike maintained an indifferent attitude toward schoolwork throughout his tenure in the Abilene school system. He liked spelling as a child because spelling bees aroused "competitive instincts"<sup>15</sup> and he was fascinated with synonyms and how a letter could change the meaning of a word. He tolerated arithmetic "because of the finality with which an answer was

right or wrong."<sup>16</sup> His penmanship he described as poor and matters of his deportment were frequently reported to the school superintendant while at the Lincoln Grammar School.

When Ike was nine or ten an incident occurred that deeply affected him. He apparently allowed his three-year old brother, Earl, to get possession of a knife which promptly blinded the youngster in one eye. Ike recalls, ". . . if I been more alert the accident would not have happened. My feeling of regret is heightened by a sense of guilt . . ."<sup>18</sup>

Ike attended newly-completed Abilene High School in 1905 - a building that attracted a more professional teaching staff, including a new-found community pride in education. Despising algebra, Ike found himself entranced with plane geometry which he saw as an "intellectual adventure."<sup>19</sup> Perhaps as a result of his apparent aptitude, he became the subject of a learning experiment. Guaranteed an A-plus grade, Ike was asked to dispense with the textbook and work out the problems on his own. This proved a successful experiment for Ike as he learned to reason logically through the problems, a method he preferred to the rigors of study and memorization. Ike learned poker outside the walls of Abilene High, mastering the probabilities so thoroughly that until "I was thirty-nine or forty

. . . I was never able to play the game carelessly or wide open."<sup>20</sup>

Ike disdained high school social clubs, describing himself as unacceptable because of his awkwardness but "probably . . . more than happy that I was never invited to membership."<sup>21</sup> He was an active leader in the school athletic association and a much-lauded participant in a Shakespearian play his senior year - both experiences from which he gained social and communicative skills. Always there were summer and after school jobs, and money saved with the hope of attending college.<sup>22</sup>

### **West Point**

"Admiral Eisenhower" has a distinctly odd ring, yet it was Annapolis for which the young Eisenhower was preparing after high school. It was only after he discovered that the two years of preparation had rendered him "too old" for admission that West Point became an option. Ike had put himself through a preparation regimen remarkably similar to that which he would use for Leavenworth. He and a friend requested and received previous tests from the Naval Academy and studied

them assiduously in preparation. Fortunately for Ike, the Navy tests were similar to those used for West Point entrance. Ike's former high school teachers also assisted by tutoring him in selected subjects. He was determined to make a good showing in each subject.<sup>23</sup>

The application process was also a learning experience in the interaction of politics, power, and reputation. Ike was pleased to confirm his father's reputation for honesty and frugality within the town and had little difficulty garnering endorsements for the appointment. "Some score or more letters"<sup>24</sup> were sent to Senator Joseph Bristow who eventually awarded Eisenhower the appointment. Ike took the final examination at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri near St. Louis. In *At Ease* Eisenhower relates his success in typical style : ". . . I learned I passed the exam somewhat above the middle of all those admitted. Since a number of those had undergone special training, I did not feel badly about my showing."<sup>25</sup>

Ike's class at West Point would be one of the most distinguished in the Academy's history. Of the 265 who matriculated in 1911, 164 graduated in 1915. The class produced 26 brigadier generals, 23 major generals, seven lieutenant generals, and Eisenhower and Omar Bradley would attain five-

star rank. In many cases, cadets appeared earmarked for greatness - not so with Ike, at least not so obviously. While he graduated 28th in practical engineering, 29th in drill regulations, and 61st overall; he was far from a model cadet in terms of discipline - where he graduated 125th in the class.<sup>26</sup>

Ike himself admits to a "a staggering catalogue of demerits,"<sup>27</sup> the full list of which was brought to his attention after he became President. *At Ease* lists the demerits of his last six months revealing a smorgasboard of absence, lateness, unauthorized smoking and failure to complete work assignments - among others. But none of his offenses breached the Point's code of honor, which would have been serious indeed. Eisenhower attributed his indiscipline to "a lack of motivation in almost everything other than athletics"<sup>28</sup> - a situation which worsened when a serious knee injury knocked him off the football team. Ike simply did not think of himself as "a scholar whose position would depend on the knowledge he had acquired in school or as a military figure whose professional career might be seriously affected by his academic or disciplinary record."<sup>29</sup> Just as he viewed the Abilene social clubs, Ike "looked with distaste on classmates . . . haunted by fear of demerits and low grades."<sup>30</sup>

Still, Eisenhower's West Point experience was a valuable one, a great source of inspiration to him throughout his life. He said of taking the oath "From here on it would be the nation I would be serving, not myself. Suddenly the flag itself meant something . . ."<sup>31</sup> Many of Ike's contemporaries later viewed his most important accomplishments as occurring outside the classroom - particularly the football field where he was an exceptionally hard worker. Underclassman Mark Clark said of those years - "He had to excel. He always had to excel."<sup>32</sup>

Cadet Eisenhower's modus operandi in mathematics was borrowed from his self-reasoned plane geometry class back at Abilene High. He was a half-listener in integral calculus, relying on his mastery of probability to help him figure the odds of being called on in class at any given moment. Figuring incorrectly one day, he was called upon to solve an extremely difficult problem for which he had not prepared. After fumbling initially, he was able to apply his own logical processes to arrive at the correct solution. This infuriated his instructor who accused him of knowing the answer beforehand and faking the procedures to arrive at it. Fortunately for Ike, an associate professor of mathematics happened to be

monitoring the episode and was impressed with his methodology, calling it "easier than we've been using . . ." and fit to be "incorporated in our procedures from now on."<sup>33</sup>

Ike's final report card termed his performance "very good" adding, " . . . should be assigned to an organization under a strict Commanding Officer."<sup>34</sup>

### **The Early Army Years**

The ten years of Army duty leading to Eisenhower's attendance at the Command and General Staff School are tremendously important to our understanding of his School experience. Many of his life's themes are developed during this period - including his personal dedication to excellence, and his realization of the importance of other people in his life. Many of the people who will play key roles in his life are introduced in these early Army years, and Ike is quickly mastering the skills that will allow him to profit by these associations. The years will also be frustrating for Ike. Stereotyped as a football coach, his conflicts with the War Department grow strident, and he will not reach the battlefields of World War I. Still, the period is a rewarding one, a series of assignments and

opportunities which Eisenhower skillfully combined into a powerful learning experience.

Eisenhower departed West Point convinced his request for duty in the Phillippines would be approved, believing himself the only applicant for positions there. Because fewer and less expensive uniforms were required for the duty in the Pacific, he reaped a small windfall from the standard uniform allowance. But The Phillippines was not in the cards and Ike, who had squandered his windfall over the summer of 1915, was forced in the end to purchase the full set of uniforms for continental duty. This he accomplished by traveling from his home in Abilene to the town of Leavenworth - the location of the nearest military tailor. It is not known whether Eisenhower visited Fort Leavenworth on that occasion, but we do know that the uniforms were bought on credit - an inauspicious beginning to his active-duty Army career.<sup>35</sup>

Eisenhower may well have wondered about the utility of his required uniforms, for his first active-duty assignment featured Fort Sam Houston, Texas near San Antonio. Fort Sam was a showcase Army post in 1915, concerned with providing a deterrent to Mexican border raids. Days were spent drilling and training enlisted men who had little equipment.<sup>36</sup> Ike's

reputation as a football player brought him to the attention of Major General Frederick Funston who coerced him into coaching a local academy football team - which he accomplished with great success and attendant publicity. Funston would later return the favor in bending a policy to allow Ike the leave necessary to marry Miss Mamie Genera Doud of Denver, Colorado. They had met on post while the Doud family was spending their winter months in nearby San Antonio.<sup>37</sup>

Marriage to Mamie had an immediate effect on Ike, who determined to tidy up his "carefree, debt-ridden"<sup>38</sup> life. At the request of Mamie's parents he decided not to re-branch to the Aviation Section, about which he had become very enamored. The responsibility of marriage and the career choice it necessitated were profound experiences for Eisenhower who seems deeply affected by the experience:

... it had brought me face to face with myself and caused me to make a decision that I have never recanted or regretted. The decision was to perform every duty given me in the Army to the best of my ability and to do the best I could to make a creditable record, no matter what the nature of the duty.<sup>39</sup>

Duties were varied, but valuable, during his Fort Sam Houston assignment - a period in which the Army was

mobilizing for the Punitive Expedition against Mexican revolutionaries. Serving as an instructor inspector for the federalized 7th Illinois National Guard Regiment, Ike effectively took over the running of the regiment. They drilled in the hot summer months and held field exercises, combat firing, and maneuvers.<sup>40</sup> Ike enjoyed his new responsibility and authority and was drawn to further study and readings in his profession. An efficiency report of the period notes his "energy, zeal," and the fact that he "availed himself of opportunities for improvement."<sup>41</sup>

Fort Sam Houston provided Eisenhower a dynamic introduction to Army life where he met a number of bright, ambitious, and engaging young officers. Assigned there was Robert Eichelberger, West Point class of 1909, who commanded the Eighth Army in the Luzon and Southern Phillippines campaigns of World War II. Later, alphabetic proximity of his last name made him Ike's deskmate at the Leavenworth course. Ike also met his lifelong friend, Leonard T. "Gee" Gerow, at Sam Houston. Gerow later commanded V Corps at Omaha Beach during the Normandy Invasion. Gerow and Eisenhower became dedicated studymates at the Command and General Staff School.<sup>42</sup>

Eisenhower saw continued duty with troops in his assignment to Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, where he conducted tough training as part of the second series of officer training camps designed to weed out weak officer cadets preparing for the rigors of World War I. In September 1917 Ike applied for duty with a machine-gun battalion earmarked for overseas combat. He was instead provided three months temporary duty at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.<sup>43</sup> Upon arrival at Fort Leavenworth in December, the post commandant immediately reprimanded him on behalf of the Adjutant General of the Army. The War Department did not approve of young officers applying for special duty. The message was clear - obey orders and let the War Department call the shots. The episode exacerbated Eisenhower's already untrusting attitude toward the War Department. He had recently received a bill for missing supplies for which he did not feel responsible. Eisenhower later summarized his thoughts in *At Ease*: "If this was my first encounter with bureaucratic blundering, it was far from the last before World War I was over . . . I felt that in a nebulous region called the War Department, I had been found wanting."<sup>44</sup>

While Ike's view of the War Department "continued to be beyond easy conversion to parlor language,"<sup>45</sup> he applied himself with vigor to his new duties. As assistant instructor for Company Q, he helped train provisional lieutenants - again in preparation for World War I duties. Author F. Scott Fitzgerald was a member of Eisenhower's platoon.<sup>46</sup> Busily engaged in the writing of his first novel, *This Side of Paradise*, during a mandatory study period, Fitzgerald was told to redirect his efforts.<sup>47</sup> Leavenworth lore would have it that Ike himself issued the reprimand, and while it is probable that he did, we cannot be sure.

Ike was also put in charge of the regiment's physical training program - a challenging task in the Leavenworth winter of 1917-18. Bayonet drills, calisthenics, and exercises were the order of the day. Describing conditions as "frequently unpleasant, and at times bitter, my duties were one way of keeping warm."<sup>48</sup>

In early March, 1918 the War Department assigned Eisenhower to Camp Meade, Maryland where he was under the mistaken assumption that he was preparing for overseas duty with the 301st Tank Battalion (Heavy). Deeply involved in

organizing the new unit, Ike was extremely disappointed that his instructional and organizational abilities had made him invaluable to the continental mobilization effort. He coordinated the final embarkation of 301st and, following War Department orders, reported to Camp Colt at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania in April.

The Camp Colt assignment initially depressed Eisenhower and as the camp grew to over 10,000 men he found himself more and more tightly bound to its mobilization and training mission. Promoted to the rank of temporary lieutenant colonel, he was given command of the camp. Though humiliated by his inability to gain a combat command in the war effort, Camp Colt provided a more valuable training ground. Combat command would have been at company or battalion level, a useful though narrow view of warfare. Camp Colt required broad understanding and skills. Building the camp and the training program from the ground up, Eisenhower experienced first-hand the logistical and leadership demands of an Army in microcosm. He learned the application of preventive medicine and proper hygiene in combating disease. A congressional inquiry tested his resolve in the face of political pressure. Shortages in supplies and equipment required his utmost innovation and skill. The post-war draw-down taught him

invaluable lessons in the motivations of soldiers and the techniques most successful in maintaining their morale. He learned to identify competent subordinates and strategically place them to accomplish the mission. Ike always begrudged the War Department his chance at combat command in World War I, but few combat theater positions offered better preparation for the challenges to come. Of his stateside experience during this period, Eisenhower would later say:

. . . I had been singularly fortunate in the scope of my first three and a half years of duty. How to take a cross-section of Americans and convert them into first-rate fighting troops and officers had been learned by experience, not by textbook. . . . My education had not been neglected.<sup>49</sup>

While Ike was at Camp Colt preparing tank crews for overseas duty, George S. Patton, Jr was intimately involved in their tactical use in France, where he earned the Distinguished Service Cross for heroism and courage. The two met during assignment to Camp Meade, Maryland in the fall of 1919. Patton was the commanding officer, 304th Tank Brigade, Eisenhower was second in command, 305th Tank Brigade. Although different in many ways, they both shared a passion for tank warfare. They were together at Meade for a year and spent much time together.<sup>50</sup>

Patton was preparing for attendance at the Command and General Staff School and he invited Ike to participate. Patton had received tactical problems from the School which the two analyzed, compared with the solutions of the School faculty, and then re-analyzed - factoring in their own field-tested tank tactics. Ike found the problems relatively easy, particularly because he worked the solutions in a stress-free environment.<sup>51</sup> They tested their tank theories extensively, confirming speed, reliability, firepower, mass, and surprise as essential ingredients in successful tank warfare. They believed that by using the terrain properly, tanks could break into enemy defenses, create confusion, and exploit the advantage by envelopment. Both would publish articles on their findings. Ike's November, 1920 article in *Infantry Journal*, though professional and seemingly noncontroversial, resulted in a summons from the Chief of Infantry who informed Ike that his ideas were wrong, and that henceforth he would keep them to himself or face court-martial.<sup>52</sup>

Eisenhower's ideas received a more enthusiastic reception from Brigadier General Fox Conner to whom Ike was introduced at a Sunday dinner in the home of the Pattons. Conner had served in France with General Pershing as the Assistant Chief of

Staff for Operations of the American Expeditionary Force. Months later he would ask Ike to join his command in Panama.<sup>53</sup>

But Camp Meade held additional trials for the Eisenhower family. Some days before Christmas, 1920 their three year-old son, "Icky," was stricken with scarlet fever. He died a short time later. Eisenhower's most eloquent and touching prose in *At Ease* is dedicated to his and Mamie's loss. The boy apparently contracted the disease from a housekeeper the Eisenhowers had hired. In addition to his grief Ike would wrestle with a sense of guilt - much as he had over the loss of his brother's eye.<sup>54</sup>

Some six months later another crisis occurred. Eisenhower was charged with "offenses of the gravest character for which he might not only be dismissed from the service but imprisoned."<sup>55</sup> Ike had claimed the sum of \$250.67 for the support of his son during a period of several months when he had been living with an aunt in Iowa. Since Mamie and he lived in quarters on Camp Meade, he had no claim to the money. To his credit, Ike had raised the issue himself when he learned that another officer on post had been prosecuted for a similar offense. This did not mollify the acting Inspector

General of the Army, Brigadier General Eli Helmick, and the matter was vigorously pursued over the ensuing six month period.<sup>56</sup>

Interestingly, it was General Pershing's rise to Chief of Staff of the Army which turned the tide on the matter. Fox Conner immediately sent a memo to his old boss vouching for Eisenhower's efficiency and requesting his assignment to Conner's command in Panama. A previous request had been flatly denied by the War Department, because charges were pending. This time however, the Army politics had changed. While Helmick had been friends with the previous Chief of Staff, Peyton March, it would perhaps not be wise to pursue an officer so well connected with the new leadership. Helmick executed an about-face and orders were issued reassigning Eisenhower to Panama by January, 1922.<sup>57</sup>

Eisenhower makes no mention of the incident in *At Ease*, saying of his re-assignment "the red-tape was torn to pieces." No doubt he learned a valuable lesson in bureaucratic politics as well as the value of a friend in high places. Ultimately, the incident had little effect on his career. His efficiency ratings in "tact" and "judgment" slipped a bit from previous ratings,

relatively minor nicks considering Ike had faced a career-ending charge.<sup>58</sup>

The Panama assignment began a fresh chapter in the life of Dwight Eisenhower. Assigned as Conner's executive officer at Camp Gaillard, Ike's experience and loyalty made him the ideal right-hand man. The mission of Conner's command was to reorganize and modernize the defense of the Canal Zone. Conner was relentless in this pursuit, and Eisenhower was often the enforcer of his policies. Conner required Eisenhower to submit a daily five-paragraph field order, an exacting task that involved analysis of mission, training, and logistics.<sup>59</sup> Because Conner believed that the harshness of the Treaty of Versailles and the U.S. failure to join the League of Nations would lead to a major conflict, he urged Ike to be ready for it.<sup>60</sup> His daily requirements were one means to assure that his young protege would apply himself to that preparation.

General Conner was a pre-war graduate of the Staff College at Leavenworth and he encouraged Ike to prepare for his own attendance. Gradually, Conner shaped Ike's assignment into an intellectual proving ground for the future. This began with the re-kindling of Ike's boyhood love of military history - a love foresaken amongst the tedious memorization

requirements at West Point. The Conner library became a place of enchantment for Ike. He read *The Long Roll* by Mary Johnston, *The Exploits of Brigadier Gerard* in the Napoleonic Wars and *The Crisis* by Winston Churchill.<sup>61</sup>

Conner questioned his pupil about the books he read, the decisions commanders in the past had made, the alternatives available, and the conditions of each situation. Ike claims to have read Clausewitz's *On War* three times during the assignment. Conner also encouraged him to read the works of Jomini and Mahan.<sup>62</sup> Ike became fascinated with the histories of the American Revolutionary and Civil wars - his screened porch becoming a war room with a drawing board and pinned-up maps used in studying the campaigns of past wars.

Discussions with General Conner were often conducted during mounted reconnaissance, as they "were constantly laying out routes and charting them on maps for the rapid deployment of troops and their supply trains . . ." <sup>63</sup> Conner was described as "something of a philosopher" who "quoted Shakespeare at length" and was a virtual "storehouse of axiomatic advice." <sup>64</sup> To hold up his end of the conversation, Ike was drawn to the works of Plato, Tacitus, and Nietzsche, sure that "sooner or later the General would be asking me about

them."<sup>65</sup> Ike would describe his tutelage as "a sort of graduate school in military affairs and the humanities, leavened by the comments and discourses of a man who was experienced in his knowledge of men and their conduct."<sup>66</sup>

Conner would rate his executive officer as "superior" in most categories, consistently slighting only Eisenhower's "physical activity" - a category which included "agility" and the "ability to work rapidly." The lower rating was probably due more to Ike's old football knee injury than a mental deficiency on his part. One of Conner's superiors, who admitted to knowing Eisenhower only "slightly," would question the rating - "I have faith in the judgment, spirit of fairness and impartiality of the reporting officer, yet I believe the rating given is too high." Later superiors would begin to echo the General's assessment which found the young major "exceptionally well fitted for general staff training." Always the General closed with the remark - "he should be sent to the course at the Army Service Schools."<sup>67</sup>

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## CHAPTER 3

### WHAT KIND OF SCHOOL?

On May 7th, 1881 - the 54th anniversary of the founding of Fort Leavenworth, Kansas - the Commanding General of the U.S. Army, William T. Sherman, ordered the establishment of a school of application for infantry and cavalry. The American Civil War and the German wars of unification had demonstrated the changing nature of warfare. War was becoming more technological and complex, and it was apparent that highly educated officers were required to conduct it. It was also out of the general despondency of the post-Civil War period that the need for additional officer education became apparent. With Indian pacification largely accomplished, the military was struggling to re-focus on what its principal mission should be. This malaise, together with the serious leadership shortcomings experienced during the war, did not go unnoticed by Army

leaders who saw in education a means of rekindling professionalism.<sup>1</sup> In its purest sense, Sherman established the School in recognition that the military was a profession with its roots in a unique body of knowledge, and that officers needed to master that knowledge to be considered professionals.

General Sherman's concept of military education guided the School of Application through its infant years. Sherman felt that officers, especially those being groomed for increasing responsibility, would benefit from the broadest possible educational experience. While he would have preferred that the School concentrate entirely on military subjects, the wide disparity of officer educational background required remedial courses to make-up the deficiencies. Many officers of the period required the basics of math, geography, and American history as well as military theory and its practical application. The early years of the School of Application afforded its students preparation for the duties they would perform at company level in an Army transitioning from the Civil and Indian War period to a peacetime Army with its attendant administrative requirements.<sup>2</sup>

During the 1890s the School evolved from its early focus on daily recitations and its "emphasis on drill, ceremonies, and

garrison duties."<sup>3</sup> Key players in this transition were Arthur L. Wagner and Eben Swift, both of whose efforts were critical factors in the evolution of pre-World War I Leavenworth doctrine, tactics and course curriculum. Wagner, who served as a course instructor and assistant commandant and influenced the School until 1903, "wanted to immerse officers in the details of a variety of tactical situations, where they could draw their own conclusions regarding a proper course to be pursued."<sup>4</sup> Eben Swift, whose direct association with the School extended until 1912, introduced the applicatory method to the curriculum, standardizing tactical analysis through the use of the five-paragraph field order - an order format which survives to this day. The process, similar to that required of Eisenhower by Fox Conner during his Panama assignment, demanded that students study the map, conduct an estimate of the situation, and make a tactical decision prior to writing the five-paragraph field order. The efforts of Wagner and Swift were critical to the maturation of a school which began with an essentially garrison mentality, and developed into a doctrine and skill-producing institution with far-reaching effects on officer development and professionalism.<sup>5</sup>

In 1904 the War Department reorganized the School as part of Secretary of War Elihu Root's proposals for a system of post-graduate military education. In theory, only the best graduates at one level of Army schools would progress to the succeeding level. Leavenworth developed into two schools, with only the top half of the first-year School of the Line graduates attending the second-year Staff College. While students at the School of the Line studied engineering, law, military hygiene, and foreign languages, the emphasis was on command and staff duties in units up to division, with tactics the central theme. The Staff College emphasized the functioning of large unit general staffs, corps level operations, and logistics. Naturally, competition became quite keen for admission to the second-year course. In the decade prior to World War I, Leavenworth stressed consistency in military operations - with the role of 'genius' downplayed. Uniformity of application and mutual understanding of tactical situations was of paramount importance at the School. The system developed a common language among its graduates, based on shared experiences and a similar approach to problem-solving. Graduates came to exude a mutual pride in their development and understanding, as "Leavenworth men" found increasing respect throughout the Army.<sup>6</sup>

World War I saw Leavenworth graduates in great demand. General John J. Pershing's American Expeditionary Force (AEF) required special expertise in the planning, logistics, and deployment of large units. Leavenworth grads were uniquely suited for the numerous command and general staff positions available. In a 1924 address at the Army War College, General Pershing attested to the contribution of school graduates :

During the World War, the graduates of Leavenworth and the War College held the most responsible positions in our armies . . . had it not been for the able and loyal assistance of the officers trained at these schools, the tremendous problems of combat, supply, and transportation could not have been solved.<sup>7</sup>

Offensive combat conducted by the Americans in the summer and fall of 1918 was remarkably like that studied at Leavenworth before the war, AEF doctrine conforming in many respects to the tactical teaching of the School. Pershing spurned British and French doctrine, insisting on uniquely American efforts. But the few number of pre-war School graduates and the demand for large numbers of trained staff officers and combat officers, compelled Pershing to set-up a three-month officer course in France - patterned after the curriculum and doctrine at Leavenworth. Throughout the

conflict Leavenworth men had the advantage of associations made at the School, the common language developed there, and a mutual confidence of having worked out difficult battle problems using the applicatory method. Evidence compiled at Pershing's direction after the war strongly suggested that Leavenworth grads had a distinct advantage over non-graduates in performing their wartime functions.<sup>8</sup>

Suspended in May 1916 "by exigency of service,"<sup>9</sup> the Leavenworth Schools reopened for the 1919 school year. After the war, authorities at Leavenworth stated that the War Department's closing of the School in national emergencies was "believed to be wrong," and noted that it seemed "improper to close it at just the time when it could perform the greatest service."<sup>10</sup> Such sentiments were certainly understandable, for the 1919-20 school year required a tremendous effort to re-establish the curriculum and in most cases to re-write textbooks based on the enlightening experience of world war. Leavenworth reverted to its pre-war organization of the one year School of the Line which emphasized military operations up to division level and the second year General Staff School which focused on corps and army levels. The General Staff School course was reserved for the top 40% to 60% of the

graduates of the School of the Line or for those having equivalent military experience.

Both schools gained considerable expertise with the influx of combat veterans to the faculty and student body. The staff and faculty believed that the doctrine and tactics taught at the School of the Line before the war had been in large part confirmed. Their goal became to establish a uniquely American doctrine and get away from the use of foreign manuals and pamphlets. They recognized that, while much had been learned in the European War, many of the facets of that effort were peculiar and not likely to be repeated. Classifications such as "open," "position," "stabilized," and "trench," could be used to describe different combat situations, but were not to be viewed as special classes of warfare. Leavenworth was to inculcate offensive spirit by the study of open warfare offensive situations, taking into account war experience with new weapons and methods of their employment.<sup>11</sup>

During the immediate post-war period, 1919 to 1923, the schools capitalized on lessons learned from the wartime experience. By 1922 the publication of American texts had been completed as had a complete revision of the War Department's *Field Service Regulations*. The Leavenworth curriculum concentrated on military organization, the tactics and

techniques of the arms of service - both separately and in combination, plans and orders, decision-making, and logistics. Instructors continued to use the applicatory method, where students learned principles in the classroom and applied them in making tactical decisions required in map exercises, maneuvers, war games, and staff rides.<sup>12</sup>

Throughout this period, school administrators noted students' general irritation with the marking system and the competitiveness which it fostered. Competition for admission to the General Staff School was keen; in the 1922 graduating class 197 officers attended the School of the Line, but only 75 continued for a second year at the General Staff School. Eleven members of the School of the Line did not graduate because of academic failure. Noting that "the question of the marking system of these schools has been carefully studied by successive commandants for the last twenty years,"<sup>13</sup> Assistant Commandant Hugh A. Drum saw the main question as how to announce the marks to students: "The announcement of the exact percentages after each problem . . . seemed to disturb the student officers and cause so keen a personal competition as to be undesirable."<sup>14</sup> Drum supported the competitive system and viewed opposition as the product of the "failures of officers who

fear competition with brother officers."<sup>15</sup> Citing his seven years association with the schools, and perhaps facing considerable pressure to change the system, Drum philosophized in his 1922 Annual Report .

Competition is the finest and healthiest trait in the American race. In all walks of American life, competition, in one form or another is a daily incident. From boyhood to manhood Americans foster and practise healthy competition. Why should the Army be an exception to this national characteristic? Competition is the life of these schools. Once it is removed, I believe the present high standard will be greatly reduced.<sup>16</sup>

Drum noted that "the spirit of the officers under instruction . . . has been uniformly excellent," although "under such keen competition, it is but natural that individual officers are at times disappointed."<sup>17</sup> Drum thought "healthy, outdoor experience of extreme importance" in dissipating "the intense mental application required at the schools."<sup>18</sup> According to him, the 18-hole golf course, polo field, 12 tennis courts, three bowling alleys, and swimming pool added much to the enjoyment and recreation of staff, faculty, families, and especially students.<sup>19</sup> Drum's successor as Assistant Commandant, Robert H. Allen, also attested to the value of recreational activity at Leavenworth :

The golf course, especially, is of extreme importance as a large majority of the officers on duty at the schools play golf. It is a conservative estimate to state that without the golf course the efficiency of these schools would be decreased by twenty-five percent.<sup>20</sup>

Allen also praised the consolidation of the School of the Line and the General Staff School begun in 1923, noting - "The consolidation into one class will do away with the disappointment which heretofore existed in the minds of those who had not made the General Staff Class."<sup>21</sup> The purpose of the consolidation was to accomodate a large group of over a thousand officers who had entered service during World War I and who had no schooling in general staff or higher command duties. In order to consolidate the two courses into a single course (now re-named the Command and General Staff School), some of the instruction in the separate arms was transferred to the various branch schools. Subjects pertaining to army and theater levels of operations were transferred to the Army War College.

Underlying the transition was considerable debate within the Army on the structure of the officer education system. General of the Armies John J. Pershing suspected that too much money was being spent shuttling officers to and from the

schools, too much of an officer's time was spent in the schools at the expense of field experience, and that there was duplication of effort within the system. Pershing convened a board of officers to study the problem. The result was a series of turf and doctrinal battles played out against a background of greatly reduced funding from which to support any decisions made. Pershing himself made the decision. Leavenworth was reduced to a one year course with the School of the Line and the General Staff School combined to form the Command and General Staff School. The effect of the decision was to limit the breadth of what could realistically be accomplished at both Leavenworth and the War College. Whereas the War College might have focused more fully on the larger issues of national defense, the reduction of the Leavenworth course to a single year compelled the War College to concentrate instead on the strictly military aspects of army and theater operations.<sup>22</sup> Directly affected by the transition was Major Dwight Eisenhower who attended the 1926 class at Leavenworth and the 1928 class at the War College.

The mission of the new Command and General Staff School was to provide instruction on:

(1) The combined use of all arms in the division and in the army corps.

(2) The proper functions of commanders of divisions and of army corps.

(3) The proper functions of General Staff officers of divisions and of army corps.<sup>23</sup>

Although officers in the first (1923) one year class at the Command and General Staff School were not as well prepared for the course as school authorities desired, they expected the preparation of future classes to improve as potential students used Correspondence Course D, available through the School.<sup>24</sup> Within a year of the change to the one year course the Commandant could declare it "eminently practical . . . free from extraneous matter and so-called padding."<sup>25</sup>

Despite the generally positive response to the one year concept, Army and Leavenworth leadership considered it a temporary measure, a three or four year effort to increase the number of officers with Leavenworth experience. Some observers continued to believe the one year curriculum sacrificed quality for quantity. Instructors presented less in-depth analysis and students were forced to digest material at a hurried pace. In 1928 the School returned to the two year

course, reducing the size of classes in the process. Commandant Brigadier General Edward L. King would later pronounce the two year curriculum successful, having provided students more time to "assimilate the instruction and practical exercises."<sup>26</sup>

The seven classes graduating from the one year course from 1923 to 1929 had the similar experiences of a stable curriculum and doctrine. To avoid trench warfare, school doctrine directed strong and aggressive offensive action to envelop or penetrate enemy defensive positions. Follow-on pursuit required pushing both enemy and friendly troops to the limit in order to deny the enemy time to reorganize. Mobility and finesse were keys to the offense, while concentrated brute force required a greater investment of men and material. Surprise was an added advantage, because the attacker was able to choose the time and place of attack. Although the defense allowed the choice of ground and could also buy time for the commander, it was only an expedient until the offense could be resumed. Extended periods of defense forfeited freedom of maneuver and had a negative impact on troop morale.<sup>27</sup>

Leavenworth instruction involving the use of tanks and airpower was not immune from the military-political

wranglings of the day. Airpower doctrine at the School emphasized the tactical support of ground forces and reflected the ground versus air turf battles of the period. Coordinated air and ground operations, such as those being developed in Germany, were not a part of the Leavenworth curriculum. Tanks were viewed as infantry weapons to overcome defensive obstacles to infantry advances; but they were seen as too vulnerable to artillery to operate independent of infantry. While there were free-thinkers in the employment of these revolutionary war machines, dogma tempered unorthodoxy, and disciplinary action threatened those who pressed on controversial issues.<sup>28</sup>

In July 1925, as the 1925-26 class began its course, a new Commandant also came to the Command and General Staff School - Brigadier General Edward L. King. A pre-World War I graduate of the School of the Line and Staff College, King was sensitive to student morale and seemed more willing than his predecessors to change established procedures. He had a somewhat different view of competition at the School, seemingly adopting a students' eye view of the proceedings. King ended the A,B,C, grading system and had instructors mark students' products "S" for satisfactory or "U" for unsatisfactory, with appropriate comments provided to rectify important

errors. The faculty continued to maintain percentage grades in order to calculate class standings, but they would reveal neither the percentages nor the standings to students until the end of the year. This was the system in place for 1925-26, but King ended both class standings and the "honor" and "distinguished" classifications for the 1927-28 class.<sup>29</sup>

King saw the mission of the School as teaching first and testing afterward. He had the class divided into committees of about twenty students and each committee had two instructors "to assist in every way possible the members of the committee to which assigned."<sup>30</sup> The instructors would "consult with and counsel students," clear up academic matters, and bring about "a closer relationship between the faculty and student body."<sup>31</sup>

The bulk of the 1925-26 curriculum consisted of three main subjects: Tactics and Technique, Tactical Principles, and Command, Staff, and Logistics. Other subjects taught included history, training, leadership, military organization, combat orders, field engineering, military intelligence, strategy, and legal principles.

The major subjects emphasized the tactics and techniques of the various branches, including their individual capabilities and their cooperation with other branches. Command, Staff,

and Logistics required the composition of administrative and field orders, the details of moving a division by truck and rail, and the logistics of supply in attack, pursuit, and defense. Perhaps the most important course, Tactical Principles and Decisions, took up the full spectrum of tactical considerations and principles and was reinforced by the students' application in staff rides, map maneuvers, and problem solving.<sup>32</sup>

Other subjects included Methods of Training, which required students to prepare map and terrain problems, map maneuvers, and field problems, as if they were using them as means of instruction. Military History emphasized the campaigns of the recently concluded World War and touched briefly on historical methodology. Leadership, taught mostly by lectures, included sections on psychology, troop-leading procedures, and leadership in a historical context.<sup>33</sup>

Detail to attend the 1925-26 Command and General Staff School was voluntary, with the policies for attendance established by the War Department, which calculated allotments for each branch. Combatant branches received 232 allotments; non-combatant branches 18 allotments. Candidates would be field grade officers, although exceptional captains expected to be promoted to major by September, 1928 could be

considered. Half the class would be officers 38 years of age or under; officers 47 or older required special qualifications. Candidates were to have an efficiency rating of at least "average" and were to be:

... familiar with the organization of the division and included units, should have a knowledge of the methods of solving tactical problems and of the form and expression of field orders, and should have a grasp of the tactics and technique of the separate arms as will properly enable them, after a brief review of the reinforced brigade, to pass to the solution of problems involving a division.<sup>34</sup>

The War Department and the applicant's branch office determined who would enter each Leavenworth class. Because those eligible for the class of 1925-26 fell within the "hump" of the increased number of officers commissioned during World War I, it was a competitive year in which to seek entrance. Branch managers would be selective in who they sent - the others would have wait their turn. This set the stage for a confrontation between a bureaucratic, authoritarian War Department on the one hand, and an obscure but determined major on the other.

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## CHAPTER 4

### THE YEAR AT LEAVENWORTH

In a letter to the Adjutant General dated August 3, 1924, Dwight D. Eisenhower made his formal request to attend the Command and General Staff School for the school year 1925-26. With his tour of foreign service in Panama expiring in January 1925, Eisenhower submitted his request "since it is felt that if the request is approved it may affect the orders to be published for my next assignment to duty."<sup>1</sup> The letter closes with the admission: "I am a graduate of no service school except the Infantry Tank School."<sup>2</sup> Fox Conner indorsed the application, noted that Eisenhower was "especially fitted to profit by the course," had "marked qualities for General Staff training," and declared that despite his lack of service school training, "he has kept pace with the Benning course, by special study and contact with recent Benning graduates."<sup>3</sup>

The letter, with indorsement, was received in the Adjutant General's Office on August 28th where it was promptly forwarded to the Office of the Chief of Infantry for comment. A handwritten response addressed to the Adjutant General is initialed "For the Chief of Infantry":

The name of Capt. DD Eisenhower has been placed on the tentative list of those officers who will be considered to attend the 1925-26 course at the C&G.S.Sc. Capt Eisenhower will be eligible for the detail as he is about to be promoted to the grade of Major at the present time.<sup>4</sup>

The Chief of Infantry returned the request to the Adjutant General's Office on August 29th. The action officer, Major Whipple, referred the paperwork to a Mr. Becker on August 30th with the hand-written directive "usual action." What results is a September 3rd indorsement through the Panama Canal Department addressed to Eisenhower. The indorsement lifted the first sentence from the Chief of Infantry draft almost verbatim, stating that Eisenhower's name "has been placed on the tentative list of those officers who will be considered for detail to the Command and General Staff School, 1925-26 course."<sup>5</sup> The indorsement consists of just the one sentence. Although Captain Eisenhower's permanent promotion status was an important consideration in his qualification for

the School, comments in that regard to the requesting officer would not have been appropriate.

One can only marvel at the speed with which the entire application process took place. The Adjutant General's Office received the request on August 28th, staffed it, and prepared a response by September 3rd. The speed with which it is processed, coupled with the essentially non-committal nature of the response, suggest that it was a very routine action. Major Whipple's "usual action" comment supports this interpretation. While considered technically qualified for attendance at the School, Eisenhower was still a great distance from attaining his objective - perhaps even farther away as a result of his application.

In the fall of 1924, three months ahead of schedule, the War Department moved Eisenhower back to Ft. Meade, Maryland to coach football. Ike describes the reasons for the move as "a cosmic top-secret to me. Then or now, one guess would be as good as another."<sup>6</sup> The reasons are perhaps not so difficult to discern. Ike had in fact coached three years of football during his previous Ft. Meade assignment, and with considerable success. The War Department wanted to build a first-rate Army team at Ft. Meade and Ike was their man. His Command and General Staff School application may well

have reminded the War Department they had a "football coach" scheduled to return from overseas - the perfect match.

The season did not go well for Ike, and it must have been a difficult return to a post where his son had died three years before. Told that he would be reassigned to Ft. Benning, Georgia at the end of the season, Ike traveled to Washington to inquire of the Chief of Infantry whether the orders could be changed so that he could attend Leavenworth. "I should have known better," Eisenhower later wrote, "he refused even to listen to my arguments."<sup>7</sup> But, by this time General Conner was serving in Washington as Deputy Chief of Staff to General John L. Hines - in the same State-War-Navy Building as the Chief of Infantry.<sup>8</sup> Ike probably visited his old mentor after the Chief of Infantry's rebuff, for several days after his return to Meade he received a telegram which read :

NO MATTER WHAT ORDERS YOU RECEIVE FROM THE  
WAR DEPARTMENT, MAKE NO PROTEST ACCEPT  
WITHOUT QUESTION SIGNED CONNER.<sup>9</sup>

Shortly thereafter, Ike received orders detailing him to recruiting duty at Ft. Logan, Colorado. In Ike's words: "To be assigned to the recruiting service, in those days . . . was felt to be a rebuke a little less devastating than a reprimand."<sup>10</sup> But Ike had been pulled from the fire by Conner once before, and

he had confidence the general was again working his magic. A letter from Conner explained everything. Because the Chief of Infantry had jurisdiction over Ft. Benning he would always have to approve the request of any officer (Ike included) at that post to attend Leavenworth. But Conner had arranged for Ike's temporary transfer from the Infantry to the Adjutant General's Office, which had charge of recruiting officers and had two billets for the 1925-26 class at Leavenworth. Conner arranged for Eisenhower to receive one of the billets. Upon receiving orders to the School with an August 1925 reporting date, Ike declared: "I was ready to fly - and needed no airplane!"<sup>11</sup>

Reflecting on the process by which he circumvented the Chief of Infantry and gained entrance to the Command and General Staff School, Eisenhower's own words are instructive:

To the cynic, all this may seem proof of "It's not *what* you know, it's *who* you know." . . . Certainly, had I been denied the good fortune of knowing Fox Conner, the course of my career might have been radically different. Because I *did* know him, I did go to Leavenworth. And I must confess that the school there, a watershed in my life, might not have been half so professionally profitable to me had I gone three years later on the schedule the Chief of Infantry thought suitable.<sup>12</sup>

Concerned that young readers might misunderstand his message, Ike continues in *At Ease* :

Always try to associate yourself closely with and learn as much as you can from those who know more than you, who do better than you, who see more clearly than you. Don't be afraid to reach upward. Apart from the rewards of friendship, the association might pay off at some unforeseen time - that is only an accidental by product. The important thing is that the learning will make you a better person.<sup>13</sup>

As the euphoria of gaining entrance faded, Ike began to have misgivings about his qualifications for the School. Unlike most of his future classmates, he had not attended a service school and consequently felt himself "being sent to college without a secondary school education."<sup>14</sup> An aide in the Office of the Chief of Infantry suggested Leavenworth attendance without a service school education could render him useless as an infantry officer and predicted: "You will probably fail."<sup>15</sup> Ike, having reservations and doubts on the matter, wrote to General Conner for advice on how to prepare for the course. The response was reassuring:

You may not know it, but because of your three years' work in Panama, you are far better trained and ready for Leavenworth than anybody I know.

You will recall that during your entire service with me I required that you write a field order for the operation of the post every day for the years you were there. You became so well acquainted with the

technics and routine of preparing plans and orders for operations that included their logistics, that they will be second nature to you. You will feel no sense of inferiority . . .16

If Eisenhower was reassured he was not over-confident, and his preparation took on the same earnestness as his preparations for the West Point entrance examinations some fifteen years earlier. Throughout the winter and spring he worked the School's correspondence problems, probably Correspondence Course D, which was designed for that purpose. The course presented problems to students for independent solution, including approved solutions in separate envelopes. Ike did not consider the work a chore, and spent considerable time on his preparation. Of his correspondence effort he remembered: "I loved to do that kind of work . . . practical problems have always been my equivalent of crossword puzzles."17

In August of 1925, Ike took the additional precaution of having his appendix removed at Fitzsimmons Army Hospital. While doctors attributed his internal disorder to the ravages of adjusting from the dissipating Panamanian climate, Ike thought it best to err on the side of safety and lower the risk of illness during the year-long grind of the Leavenworth course.18 The

trip from Ft. Logan, Colorado to Ft. Leavenworth was not a long one, unless one considers the heat encountered in a journey through that part of the country in the summer of 1925. In a sense the journey was another rite of passage for the Eisenhower family, which included three year old son John. Mamie's parents, the Douds, were Denver residents, and it was undoubtedly with mixed emotions that the trip back to Eisenhower country was undertaken. It is not known whether the Eisenhower's stopped in Abilene, some 150 miles west of Ft. Leavenworth, but it is difficult to imagine the Eisenhowers not visiting there as it was along the route.

Upon reporting at Ft. Leavenworth, a piece of good luck met Ike and Mamie. Rather than being quartered in the "Bee Hive," with nearly one hundred other student families, they were given quarters across the street in Otis Hall. Converted from engineer troop barracks, the cramped Bee Hive was a tremendous community trial for the students who lived there; especially for their children who were restricted from playing in the halls or making other noise that might interfere with studying. James L. Collins, Sr., a classmate who rented a house off post wrote his wife in August, 1925: "Am certainly glad we are not in the bee hive . . ."19

Otis Hall, on the other hand, had been converted from 24 bachelor apartments in 1921, and in 1925 consisted of eight apartments for married couples. In 1922 the post added electric ranges to the kitchens and central heating to replace separate furnaces.<sup>21</sup> The Eisenhowers were assigned apartment 2C, a second-floor apartment which included a third-floor dormer. The dormer became Ike's model command post, "off limits to all post and family personnel." His childhood desire for "splendid isolation" effectively achieved, the dormer gradually took on the look of his screen porch in Panama. He had soon covered the walls with maps, installed a large work table, and stacked the bookshelves with class reference materials.<sup>22</sup>

In the words of another student "the usual joys of getting settled were intensified by the sweltering weather during the first part of September."<sup>23</sup> That the "post administration" had systematized the procedure for processing and moving onto post was one of the saving graces of the experience.<sup>24</sup> Perhaps exacerbated by the September heat, the class considered the opening exercises a test of endurance. Yet here began the class' love affair with the new School Commandant, Brigadier

General Edward L. King, or "Big Hearted Eddie" as he was affectionately known.<sup>25</sup>

On September 11th, King presented a lecture to the class on the subject of command, in which he skillfully articulated how the inherent power and authority of command must be tailored by the unique abilities and personality of the individual commander. In terms that must have been especially heartening to Major Eisenhower, King took many of his command analogies from the football field. King described the commander as the "one who gives the signal," and likened staff members to members of the team. The team would push the "play" to the limit "until the ball is down." Individual members of the staff were also like players as they were "presumed to be competent else [they] would not be on the team." Just as players must keep the "field captain" informed as to "whether his opponent is hard to handle," so "staff officers should keep their chief constantly informed as to the possibilities." And finally :

A football team composed of individuals of medium ability, indoctrinated in teamwork and led by a real leader, will beat a team of hastily assembled stars, all wanting to carry the ball individually and in eleven different directions.<sup>26</sup>

The "Class of 1926" (classes are known by the date of graduation) began with 248 students; 245 would graduate. Of the three who did not, one transferred, one resigned, and one was relieved for illness.<sup>27</sup> It was a "young" class, perhaps younger than any before it, with the average age of students "well under forty."<sup>28</sup>

Welcomes and advice from the school director and various instructors characterized the opening days of the course. Instructors assured the students that there were no "trick" problems and warned them not to play hunches, to blindly follow the solutions or methods of previous problems, or to attempt to straddle the fence in presenting solutions. Students were told to "tackle" problems with an open mind, and were encouraged to put themselves into the equation as though the situation actually existed.<sup>29</sup>

But soon the students faced the hard daily schedule that had come to symbolize the Leavenworth course. During the first month, in order to give students a feel for the "applicatory system," the staff did not grade the solutions to problems. The illustrative problems reinforced important military principles. The daily routine divided mornings into three periods of one hour each, beginning at 8:30 A.M. and

continuing until noon, with breaks scheduled after each hour. During these lecture or conference periods, instructors called upon students at random for comments, but again did not grade these "recitations". Afternoons began at 1:00 P.M. and normally consisted of map problems and practical exercises where students prepared an estimate of the situation for instructor criticism. Despite numerous free afternoon periods, students had extensive readings in preparation for future classes, which required their afternoon and evening study time.<sup>30</sup>

Tactical rides provided a welcome change for some, though Ike would recalled that "many hated this with a passion."<sup>31</sup> This was certainly not the case for Ike, because General Connor had thoroughly rehearsed him in the process. The entire class rode horseback to an unknown destination for reconnaissance. Maps provided by the instructors showed principal features, but the students conducted detailed terrain analysis by observation. Students received a statement of the tactical situation and several requirements, involving drafting orders for troop movements and the like, to be turned in by a designated hour. Students had their first graded problems in October, but the weight of the problems again reflected a

gradual introduction to the course. The first eight problems each counted five units out of the 1,000 in the total course. Five of the eight problems were terrain exercises conducted on the tactical rides. These rides ended in October and would not resume until spring. During the winter, map problems were solved indoors, usually on the Gettysburg and Leavenworth three-inch maps.<sup>32</sup> The Gettysburg map provided Ike a rare advantage; he knew the terrain from his Camp Colt days and could orient quickly from his first-hand knowledge of the area.

Though he had no way of knowing it at the time, Ike's performance - relative to his peers - was lowest in that first graded month of October. Although ranking 14th in a class of nearly 250 students was exemplary, he would finish in the top ten every month thereafter.<sup>33</sup> His increasing success was due in large part on the selection of a study system which took place in October.

There were three general study systems in use at the School during that time - single, committee, and the partner method. Committees usually consisted of four to eight members who split up work and shared each other's views. Although one committee invited Ike to join, he declined, not wanting "to get involved with too much conversation,

argument, and discussion."<sup>34</sup> Perhaps reminiscent of his early eschewal of Abilene's social clubs, Ike was not interested in a group approach to the task. At least this time he was apparently asked to join a group - a point he would find significant enough to mention in *At Ease* some forty years later.

While solitary study offered the greatest independence, Ike also saw its drawbacks - loss of perspective and the possibility of going stale. In the partner system he saw many advantages and few disadvantages. Partners could serve as a check on each other and help remove much of the monotony of study. While plotting tactical situations on a map, one could read instructions while the other marked the map. Although the partner system had no direct effect on problems solved in class, Ike could see in teamwork a legitimate method of saving "precious hours" and assimilating the principles of a subject.<sup>35</sup>

Although he considered several of his friends, Ike teamed with Leonard T. Gerow, a close friend from his Ft. Sam Houston days. Gerow, a graduate of the Virginia Military Institute, was about the same age as Ike, and shared his distrust of committees and his desire to excel in the course. He had also graduated first in his class at Ft. Benning's Infantry School.

Because Gerow lived across the street in the Bee Hive, Ike's "model command post" in the dormer of Otis Hall was the ideal meeting place and it became the site of their most intense efforts. "We learned far more in quiet concentration than in the lecture room," Ike would later say of their efforts together.<sup>36</sup>

Ike clearly favored a measured and reasonable approach to the course, and discounted theories which ascribed mysterious qualities to it. He shared his views of the School in an article designed for prospective students entitled "The Leavenworth Course" published in the June, 1927 issue of *Infantry Journal*.<sup>37</sup> In the article Ike notes that "some officers keep a rather complete system of notes covering points considered important, others keep none at all."<sup>38</sup> Ike had unusual assistance in this regard. Exactly where on the notetaking spectrum George S. Patton, Jr. stood is not known, but Ike did have a copy of Patton's notes throughout the course. Despite the basic similarity of Patton's 1924 course and Ike's in 1926, the use of materials from prior years was not prohibited. In fact, a classmate of Ike's publicly advised in the *Cavalry Journal* - "Among the most helpful aids to study, are the old problems used in former years . . ."<sup>39</sup> Apparently

Ike thought the notes of his old friend from Ft. Meade helpful, or so Patton intimated shortly after Ike's graduation: "You are very kind to think my notes helped you. . . . I feel sure that you would have done as well without them."<sup>40</sup> Exactly how helpful the notes were will probably never be known. Patton was known as a hard worker in the 1924 class and was an Honor Graduate. Other than the rather oblique reference to notes in his *Infantry Journal* article, Ike makes no reference to their use.<sup>41</sup> Patton's generous tone is discounted by his biographer, Martin Blumenson, who surmises: "Eisenhower graduated first in his class and Patton was sure that his papers were responsible."<sup>42</sup>

As the course moved indoors for the winter months, the problems given to students, though less frequent, were of greater complexity and carried increased weight for class standings. The subjects of the problems became increasingly more complex, requiring students to review the principles and techniques presented in earlier classes. Map maneuvers simulated the tactical and logistical deployment of units by moving bits of cardboard around on the map and requiring students to assume roles of the various staff officers. Usually, school solutions "carried conviction" and seemed "surprisingly

simple and obvious once given" - at other times solutions were highly debatable and hinged on a complete understanding and interpretation of the given circumstances.<sup>43</sup>

System and method were key to the Eisenhower approach to solving the written problems, an approach he shared with future students in his *Infantry Journal* article. Success in the problem-solving hinged on a comprehensive estimate of the situation or as Ike would write: ". . . a problem cannot be correctly solved unless the situation as issued is thoroughly understood." This he termed the "common sense solution of problems" citing "prosaic common sense" as of more value than the spark of genius. Most errors, he felt, came as a result of the basic failure to methodically stake-out the problem. Visualization was also important. Ike tried to regard troop movements as real movements carried out under the actual circumstances described by the problem, always asking the question "does it carry out my mission?"<sup>44</sup>

This visualization process of working oneself thoroughly into the problem had some interesting side effects, as described by William H. Gill, a 1925 graduate and instructor for the 1926 class:

Well, you worked yourself so thoroughly into the problem to consider every angle that would influence General A in his decision, that the first thing you knew, you assumed the time of the problem being your time as you sat there. . . . I did this one time and I got so absorbed in the problem . . . that I thought to myself - well what the devil am I doing here at 4:00 in the morning. Well I just lost sight of the fact that that was a fictitious problem . . . time . . . was about four or five in the afternoon.<sup>45</sup>

The pressure students felt toward graded problems was considerable - even if largely self-imposed. Many still viewed performance at Leavenworth as a steppingstone to continued career success. General Omar N. Bradley, a 1929 graduate, later wrote: ". . . the assumption had taken root that a high grade at the Command and General Staff School would almost insure promotion to colonel or general, for too long the competition had been literally killing."<sup>46</sup> Bradley, Eisenhower, and much of the secondary literature on the School cite nervous breakdowns and suicides among students throughout this period. Although little hard evidence exists to support these accounts, they do reflect the pressures perceived by the students. While Ike noted that "students became tense under the competition," no one in his class committed suicide, "but we must have been a very difficult group because one of the instructors did."<sup>47</sup> The 1926 Annual Report reports Major Phillip H. Bagby, a school instructor, died on March 16, 1926 <sup>48</sup> - reasons for death for

students and instructors are not provided in the Annual Reports. The reports of nervous breakdowns and suicides may well have arisen from the class of 1925 where the Annual Report records the "relief" of four Regular Army officers due to illness and the death of a student whose name is not listed.<sup>49</sup>

Whatever the pressures at work within the class of 1926, they had to have been considerably lessened with the arrival of Commandant Edward L. King. King downplayed the role of competition in the School and made "every effort to increase the morale factor, particularly with reference to the student body."<sup>50</sup> He viewed the selection of the top graduate as well as the division of the class into "honor" graduates, "distinguished" graduates, and "graduates," as an administrative bother. The 1926 yearbook, which the class dedicated to King, describes him as "fun loving," solving the "problems of manhood with . . . simplicity and carefree abandon . . .," and retaining "optimism . . . from his boyhood days."<sup>51</sup> If previous classes took themselves too seriously, the influence of General King was the perfect antidote. The attitude adjustment engineered by General King may well have been a conscious effort on his part to reverse the over-seriousness of previous years.

The class of 1926 seems to have emerged from the year with its sense of humor intact. Hardly a serious note can be found in the class yearbook, *The Horseshoe*, whose object is "merriment and laughter" and whose writers "have already had all the troubles due us and our friends for a lifetime."<sup>52</sup> Robert Eichelberger, Ike's deskmate, realized "that I had at no time any feeling of depression because of my work at that school,"<sup>53</sup> and mid-way through the course another student observed that "our morale as a class is still excellent."<sup>54</sup>

Ike also enjoyed his experience at Ft. Leavenworth, recalling: "Leavenworth is in every way a reasonable and normal place."<sup>55</sup> Students had week-ends free and were encouraged to use them for recreational pursuits. The Officer's Club or Golf Clubhouse frequently held formal dances on Friday and Saturday nights and the Dramatic Club gave monthly performances. Accounts of the school during the 1920s also allude to frequent trips to Kansas City with students having been issued complimentary guest-cards to the Kansas City Athletic Club.<sup>56</sup>

General King cited the fort's "splendid facilities . . . for exercise and entertainment" and noted that "these facilities have been used to the maximum."<sup>57</sup> Among these facilities

was the newly laid-out golf course to which Major Eisenhower found his way:

It was in the spring of 1926 that I first picked up a golf stick, but if my progress in academics had been no greater in golf I would never have gotten through the course.<sup>58</sup>

Golf became a life-long hobby for Ike and a source of needed relaxation for him. "You can't have a low score card if you worry about something else," Mamie later said of his pastime, "That's why golf is good for Ike. He can really get his mind off his problems for a few hours a week."<sup>59</sup>

Ike was perhaps fortunate that Mamie indulged his occasional sojourns on the golf course, because some students' wives pushed their husbands to do well. Low pay and slow promotions, combined with the prevailing air of significance applied to success at the School undoubtedly created additional pressure for some officer-husbands. Wives developed their own social cliques, usually centered on their living area, and tended to establish their own versions of success. "Miss Em, like most wives, was pushing hard for my success," Robert Elchelberger recalled, "It was rather ludicrous to realize that she was falling for the immodest statements of some of the officers who were quartered in the same building with us."<sup>60</sup>

As the course progressed Ike found it "easy to identify those people who were studying too long . . . coming to the daytime sessions . . . without fresh minds and an optimistic outlook."<sup>61</sup> In his *Infantry Journal* article he would refer to Leavenworth as "not a place, but a state of mind."<sup>62</sup> As in any school these states of mind undoubtedly varied among students. While the grading system had been deliberately downplayed to relieve tension, students could still become distracted by speculation. Since students received an "S" for any satisfactory grade covering the spectrum from 75-100 percent, speculation on the actual percentage achieved or the relative class standing of the student was, according to Ike, "always interesting, but not too much time should be spent on it."<sup>63</sup>

How hard did Ike *really* work at Leavenworth? Ike himself downplays his efforts. Most biographers, on the other hand, disregard Ike's comments, and focus on the obvious efforts required to graduate number one in his class. Proponents of this view tend to exaggerate the number of students in the class, most frequently increasing the class size from the actual 245 to 275. It is difficult to discern where the 275 figure originated, although a special class of 32 reservists

and National Guardsmen also graduated in 1926. Someone perhaps added them for good measure, either miscounting the names in records or simply rounding the number to 275. More importantly, a serious dichotomy exists between what Ike says of his approach to the course and the efforts biographers attribute to him. Even Merle Miller, perhaps the most thorough explorer of Eisenhower during this period, can only surmise: "The advice he gave . . . is excellent advice indeed, but, as is so often the case with advice givers, he didn't follow it."<sup>64</sup>

Ike emphasized, in the *Infantry Journal* article, that students should maintain a positive attitude and avoid worry. Because throughout the course students did not know their class standing, they would ultimately do best by not worrying about it and by keeping "interested in the work."<sup>65</sup> With respect to his own study habits, Ike reported :

I established a routine that limited my night study to two hours and a half; from seven to nine-thirty. Mamie was charged with the duty of seeing that I got to bed by that time. This went on five nights a week.<sup>66</sup>

Mamie Eisenhower recounted a somewhat different view to her biographer, recalling her husband "up at one or two in the

morning . . . still fighting his theoretical battles, while mounds of cigarette stubs littered every ash tray."<sup>67</sup> As final exams approached "his absorption in his studies became demonical," and Mamie had to "force her husband to take ten minutes to eat."<sup>68</sup>

Although at their extremes the two pictures appear opposite, they are not irreconcilable. Certainly Ike had long downplayed his efforts at West Point and *At Ease* clearly shows his tendency to look down on classmates overly concerned about grades. This tendency seems to carry over to his view of Leavenworth, as well as to his advice on how others should approach the course. The big change in Ike from West Point to Leavenworth is how he viewed academic accomplishment and its benefits. At West Point he had difficulty visualizing himself as "a military figure whose professional career might be seriously affected by his academic or disciplinary record."<sup>69</sup> By the time he attended Leavenworth he had a much clearer vision of himself, a more developed thirst for learning, as well an understanding of the impact doing well at the School could have on his career.

In evaluating the disparity of accounts regarding Ike's effort at Leavenworth, a case can be made that each of the

two basic accounts are valid but have not been correctly related to one another. To begin this reconciliation, one must first accept Ike's basic desire to excel in the course. There is ample evidence for this conclusion: his extensive preparation, his basic competitiveness and concern for "doing well," his recognition of the importance of the course, and indeed his ultimate number one standing. Once we accept his essential ambition in the course, the question of how hard he studied becomes - "how smart did he study?" The answer undoubtedly, was *very* smart.

If Ike chooses to emphasize pacing, rest, and positiveness in his account of his efforts he is probably correct in doing so. Certainly there was little pay-off in the course for rote memorization and academic drudgery. Leavenworth emphasized problem-solving - a skill at which Ike excelled in every period of his life. Over the long haul rest, pacing, and grace under pressure were key ingredients to his ultimate success. Mamie's recollections probably hearken to the final months of the course when, despite official silence on the matter, Ike may well have known a great deal about his relative class standing. He certainly picked up the pace those last three months - he was fourth in the class in March, third

in April, and third again in May - clearly his most successful period in the course.<sup>70</sup>

Ike developed close relationships with several of his instructors during the course, and likely received some inkling of his relative class standing from them. Of these relationships Ike would write :

During recesses between conferences you have splendid opportunities for dropping into the office of any instructor you'd like to see. The little talks you will have with these officers . . . will prove invaluable to you. Instructors are anxious to help, and you can ask specific questions or just sit around and listen to the general conversation. The insight into the school, and the understanding of the whole course you will pick up in this manner is remarkable.<sup>71</sup>

Competition for the number one position in the class of 1926 was extremely keen, a situation which the faculty followed closely. William H. Gill, an instructor that year, revealed their behind-the-scenes interest in the class of 1926 :

We made a pool after we began to realize that two men were more or less fighting . . . for first place. . . One day, one would be ahead, and the next test they had, the other one would be ahead. So it seesawed back and forth all through the year. But the people like myself had nothing to gain by it except maybe betting. . . . But one of them was Gerow . . . who was a bright young fellow. The other one was named Eisenhower. . . . We bet a dollar and we would win maybe a pot of 10 or 15. . . . In June, when the thing was over, it turned out that Ike was the final head man and Gerow was number two.<sup>72</sup>

Although Gill repeats the frequently made error that Gerow was the number two graduate (he was actually 11th),<sup>73</sup> his revelation of the behind-the-scenes jockeying is enlightening. Apparently student standings were well known to faculty throughout the year, as well as a subject of considerable interest. If, as Ike advised future students to do, he spent time with instructors "listening to the general conversation" gaining "insight into the school,"<sup>74</sup> then it is not difficult to imagine that he picked up intimations that he was doing well in the course.

One of Mamie's biographers stated that in May "Ike was no use to anybody," that as final examinations approached he became absorbed in his studies. During examination time Mamie was "amazed that Ike was suddenly calm," but he explained that he had "done all he could and there was no use worrying."<sup>75</sup> The account is a simple one, but in it can be seen the evidence of sharply increased effort at the end of the course, coupled with Ike's special ability to produce the calm he extolled in his *Infantry Journal* article.

The Faculty Board met at 9:00 A.M. on June 16, 1926. Chaired by Brigadier General King, the committee included the Assistant Commandant, School Director, Correspondence School

Director, and the School Secretary. Their function was to confirm the statistical analyses of students provided to them, to approve the graduation of students, and make specific recommendations on a student's capability for higher training in command and staff duties, general staff corps duty, and future attendance at the Army War College. Dwight Eisenhower's class standing is recorded as number "1" and he is classified "HG" or honor graduate, a distinction extended down to the 25th graduate - the top ten percent of the class. Having achieved 930.79 units out of a the 1,000 possible, his percentage is recorded as 93.08 - slightly ahead of Major Charles M. Busbee who finished second with 92.85. Major Gerow was 11th with a 91.37 percentage. The board recommended both Ike and "Gee" for the full spectrum of higher level command and staff duties and additional advanced schooling. The board adjourned at 3:00 P.M. - all 245 students who completed the course would graduate.<sup>76</sup>

Mamie remembered the neighborhood hubbub created by the June 16th announcement of Ike's class standing as anything but calm. Their quarters became a parade of "hand-shaking, back-slapping, and well wishing" conducted by "front door, back door, and telephone." It made for a "long day and longer night

through which Mamie recalled being "hoarse with laughter and excitement."<sup>77</sup>

Separate telegrams arrived from the Douds. Mamie's father, on business in Boone, Iowa sent the words: "Congratulations I felt that you would do it and am pleased."<sup>78</sup> From Denver, Mrs. Doud wired: "Oh Boy what a thrill Hurrah I am broadcasting the news we are all fine love and kisses."<sup>79</sup> Mamie had undoubtedly called one or the other with the news, and the enthusiasm of their responses indicates their awareness of the significance of the accomplishment. Mr. Doud's brief words suggest an awareness that a specific goal had been achieved.

The celebration continued the following evening in Kansas City. Ike and Gee Gerow arranged a party at the Muehlback Hotel, reportedly with a \$150 loan from Ike's brother, Arthur, who was then vice president of the Commerce Trust Company in Kansas City.<sup>80</sup> Arthur's connections also made possible the provision of gin and whiskey - no small feat during the prohibition era. The party lasted until daybreak, most accounts of which feature a great deal of singing, with Ike in the lead.<sup>81</sup>

Ike's Command and General Staff School efficiency report, indorsed by Brigadier General King, described him as "alert, forceful, resourceful, dependable and courteous." He was "superior" in attention to duty, initiative, intelligence, energy and resolution, judgment and common sense, and leadership. He was judged "above average" in physical endurance, military bearing and neatness, and tact. He fell to "average" in only his old nemesis - physical activity, which included "agility" and the "ability to work rapidly." The narrative denotes him an "Honor Graduate - especially qualified for all staff positions at division and corps."<sup>82</sup>

Ike's performance was noted by General King who personally asked Ike if he had any objection to being placed "on the list of instructors for the next year at Leavenworth."<sup>83</sup> Ironically, in his 1925-26 Annual Report King included two comments which, had they been applied to Major Eisenhower, would have precluded him from attending the School: "Officers recently recovering from an appendicitis or similar operation should not be sent to this school . . . officers coming here should be graduates of the special service schools . . ." King also questioned the labor required in determining Honor and Distinguished Graduates stating, "I do not know that it is of any

particular value to anybody in the service in later years to be rated as Honor and Distinguished."<sup>84</sup>

King's words to the graduates at commencement exercises were somewhat more uplifting. In a ceremony interrupted by a heavy downfall of rain, King stated: "At the completion of your schooling here, the foundation has been laid, and the framework of your future life erected."<sup>85</sup> Describing the post as a "desolate place on Saturday morning" the Leavenworth Times noted "cars loaded to the guards with luggage . . . speeding along the fort road and heading for the open highway."<sup>86</sup> Speaking of the members of the class of 1926 King said: "It is for him to decide whether he shall be a leader or follower, whether he shall use his knowledge, or whether he shall be content to let it lie dormant."<sup>87</sup> For at least one Leavenworth graduate, on the road to a family reunion in Abilene, the answer was no longer in doubt.

## NOTES

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25. Ibid.
26. Edward L. King, Lecture delivered to the Command and General Staff School, September 11, 1925, CARL, Ft Leavenworth, KS, 8-9.
27. Annual Report, 1926, 11.
28. "School," Cavalry, 414.
29. Ibid., 412.
30. Ibid., 412-13.
31. Dwight D. Eisenhower to Ft. Leavenworth Historical Society, February 16, 1967. Leavenworth County Museum. Leavenworth, Kansas.
32. "School," Cavalry, 413.
33. Class Standing Report (FM 1035 G.S. Schs Ft. Leavenworth) Personal Records (Dwight D. Eisenhower), (A Component of the Records of the Adjutant General: Record Group 407) 1910-1973. The Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, KS.
34. Eisenhower, At Ease, 199.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid

37. It is Merle Miller in his 1987 biography, Ike the Soldier, who attributes the article to Eisenhower. Some caution may be required here. Miller's biography of Eisenhower makes numerous finds of this sort, but his chapter notes are unclear as to how the connection was actually made. Miller died in June, 1986 and correspondence with Carol Hanley, a research assistant, was reassuring, though not conclusive. "The Leavenworth Course" does fit remarkably well with Ike's comments about the School in At Ease. Similar themes are present in both accounts; the need for an optimistic outlook, the virtues of the 'partner system', and the downplaying of rote memorization. Infantry Journal attributes the article simply to "A young graduate." "The Leavenworth Course," Infantry Journal, vol 35, no. 6 (June, 1927), 589-600.

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## CHAPTER 5

### WHAT KIND OF WATERSHED?

After the Leavenworth graduation the Eisenhowers journeyed home to Abilene for a family reunion that has become almost legendary among Ike's biographers. It may have been the only time in their adult lives the six Eisenhower brothers gathered at the Second Street house. The reunion was an act of mutual congratulation - and with good reason - the brothers were rising above their humble beginnings and achieving remarkable success. Arthur was a successful banker, Earl an engineer, Milton an assistant secretary of agriculture, Edgar a lawyer, and Roy a pharmacist. The brothers played golf at a local country club and swaggered, arm in arm, down the streets of Abilene, as if in celebration of their success.<sup>1</sup> Throughout the reunion there was competition, with Ike bent on wrestling his older brother Edgar, who had held the upper hand as a child. Edgar successfully avoided the challenge but

their father David, now 63, accepted it. The men's father achieved quite a moral victory for it was only after considerable struggle that Ike was able to wrestle him to the ground. A family photograph taken at the reunion appears very serious. Only Ike, dressed in his Army uniform, is smiling.

Ike apparently wrote to his comrade from Ft. Meade days, George S. Patton, with news of his Leavenworth class standing. Patton responded early in July stating that the news "delighted me more than I can say. . . . It shows that Leavenworth is a good school if a HE man can come out number one in his class. . . . If a man thinks war long enough it is bound to effect him in a good way."<sup>2</sup> Patton attempted to put the Leavenworth experience in perspective:

I am convinced that as good as Leavenworth is it is still only a means not an end and thus we must keep on. I have worked all the problems of the two years since I graduated and shall continue to do so. However I don't try for approved solutions any more but rather to do what I will do in war.<sup>3</sup>

This exchange of letters between the two men began a correspondence which would continue until Patton's death. Ike deferred to Patton in most matters, asked for a regiment in Patton's 2nd Armored Brigade in September, 1940<sup>4</sup> and

assumed in April, 1942 that Patton would be "the 'Black Jack' of the damn war."<sup>5</sup> Patton responded that "... being selfish there is nothing I would like more than to be the 'Black Jack' of this war with you the assistant 'B.J.' or even the other way around."<sup>6</sup> In May 1942, with Ike serving as Chief of the Operations Division of the War Department General Staff under Marshall and Patton bucking for a combat command, Patton wrote:

Sometimes I think your life and mine are under the protection of some supreme being or fate, because, after many years of parallel thought, we find ourselves in the positions we now occupy.<sup>7</sup>

Ike's meteoric rise had included key positions under John Pershing, Douglas MacArthur, and George Marshall. In a sense he owed his connections to Patton, who had introduced him to Fox Conner. It was Conner who made possible the Pershing and Marshall connections, as well as entry to Leavenworth. Conner would again rescue Ike, whose graduation from Leavenworth had placed him in the clutches of the War Department. His class standing availed little in the War Department, which made assignments well before the class standings were determined. The War Department had assigned Ike to Ft. Benning, Georgia as the executive officer of an infantry

regiment and coach of the Ft. Benning football team. When the season ended, Conner, still serving as Deputy Chief of Staff of the Army, arranged for Ike to come to Washington and write a guidebook to World War I battlefields on which Americans had fought.<sup>8</sup> It was to be written under the direction of General Pershing, then serving as chairman of the American Battle Monuments Commission. Ike established a close rapport with Pershing but his work was interrupted by selection to attend the Army War College in August, 1927.

While Ike devotes five pages of *At Ease* to his Leavenworth experience, the War College garners only a brief comment: "To graduate from the War College had long been the ambition of almost every officer and I was anxious to take the assignment."<sup>9</sup> The War College was a relaxed assignment seen by some as a reward for a successful career and by others as a steppingstone to the general officer ranks. Nevertheless, the War College built on Ike's Command and General Staff School experience as it dealt with the large problems of war - "supply, movement of large bodies of troops, relations with allies, grand strategy" - knowledge Ike would need in his World War II role as Supreme Commander.<sup>10</sup>

The War College Commandant, Major General William D. Connor, who some writers have confused with Major General Fox Conner, took a personal interest in Ike, his ideas, and career.<sup>11</sup> Connor played a major role in restructuring the War College curriculum, although much of the restructuring took place after Ike's attendance. Philosophically akin to Ike's championing of the estimate of the situation, Connor insisted that students "know the facts" and then conduct in-depth analysis in arriving at courses of action. While Connor recognized the intangibles of war, he required students to determine "how many men and weapons were required to defend a sector of specific size and configuration, and how many days and hours were needed to concentrate, move, and deploy corps and divisions."<sup>12</sup> Connor had War College students participate in the writing of four staff studies pertaining to war preparations, complete two historical analyses of past campaigns, and contribute to the drafting of a hypothetical war plan. Students participated in three month-long war games, a command post exercise, and a strategic reconnaissance. They heard lectures on a variety of subjects, from both within and without the Army, and prepared individual staff memorandums proposing an action to better the Army.<sup>13</sup> Ike

wrote on "An Enlisted Reserve for the Regular Army" which drew high praise from General Connor. Seventeen pages long, the paper argued against the isolationist mentality of the time and for developing a rapidly expandable expeditionary force which would ultimately save resources and lives.<sup>14</sup>

Although as Army Chief of Staff Ike would fault the Army War College for its shortcomings in providing a doctrine for Allied combined operations, he would find the experience helpful in approaching tactical and strategic challenges. He wrote to William Connor in March, 1943:

There is no doubt about the extent of influence that you are still exerting on operations in this war. Oddly enough, when the decision was made last November 11th to start rushing toward Tunisia in an effort to grab off the last foot that we could in the direction of Tunis before the German could get in, I actually related to some members of my Staff your particular solution to a very "defensive-looking" problem we once had in the War College. When we were still wondering whether the French would fight us or help us, there were many people who counselled me to be more cautious, to develop my bases, perfect my build-up and bring in steadily the troops that we would need to wage a rather ritualistic campaign in that direction. Had we done this, we would probably now be fighting a rather heavy battle somewhere in the vicinity of Constantine.

When that argument was going on, I recalled the particular War College problem that made such an impression on me. We had been working on a problem of resisting invasion in Connecticut, and all the statistical technicians had worked out in detail the most advanced line that they could defend consistent with getting the logistics properly arranged and the necessary forces on the field. Your criticism of the

problem was that it obviously called for an instant and continuous attack. I remember you said - 'Attack with whatever you've got at any point where you can get it up, and attack and keep on attacking until this invader realizes that he has got to stop and re-organize, and thus give to us a chance to deliver a finishing blow.'<sup>15</sup>

In his ever-increasing positions of responsibility during World War II, Ike had his Leavenworth and War College experiences as a theoretical backdrop from which to analyze the harsh problems of total war. He undoubtedly felt as well that his actions would one day be judged in these sterile school environments; that the actions he took in the fog of battle would one day be dissected by future students, aided by hindsight. The schools gave Ike a frame of reference and a means of measuring the conduct of the war. In December, 1942 he told a colleague:

I think the best way to describe our operations to date is that they have violated every recognized principle of war, are in conflict with all operational and logistic methods laid down in textbooks, and will be condemned, in their entirety by all Leavenworth and War College classes for the next twenty-five years.<sup>16</sup>

While World War II, like any war, produced its own litany of lessons learned, "Leavenworth men" again proved their worth in battle. In campaigns which dwarfed previous American experience, American military leadership demonstrated that the nation could mobilize, train its forces, transport armies to multiple theaters worldwide, and bring to

bear the full might of its strength against its enemies. For Eisenhower, the war challenged his intellect, stamina, and ability to lead. He emerged as an American hero - the success of the Allies viewed by many Americans as in large part synonymous with his success. Ike emerged as a figure many Americans could love. His style contrasted with the pomposity and heavy-handedness of Patton and MacArthur. His celebrated smile and apparent grace under pressure were characteristics Americans greatly admired. Ike, perhaps more than any military figure in the war, epitomized how Americans wished to see themselves even as they engaged in the ruthlessness of war - as humane, confident, and warm.

Eisenhower's stature and post-war career significantly affected U.S. military education, both in structure and doctrine. His success in coalition warfare had demonstrated the criticality of effectively coordinating with allies across the spectrum of air, land and sea power. Neither Leavenworth nor the War College had adequately prepared officers for the undertaking, and Ike, perhaps better than anyone, understood the nature of this shortcoming. During his tenure as Chief of Staff (1945-1948) the Armed Forces Staff College was founded, an institution designed to fill this void. Much of the impetus for this change grew from the War Department Education Board which Eisenhower

approved in his capacity of Chief of Staff in November, 1945. Ike's former study-mate at Leavenworth, Lieutenant General Leonard Gerow, headed the board. Interestingly, Gerow was then serving as Commandant of the Command and General Staff School at Leavenworth. Thus the two former classmates played a major role in shaping post-war officer education.<sup>17</sup>

As President, Eisenhower also had an impact on officer professional development and the school at Leavenworth. His administration adopted the "New Look" defense policy which sought to limit defense spending to levels which the economy could comfortably support. The policy had the effect of reducing defense budgets and the Army's force structure. In 1953 the Eisenhower administration essentially forsook the concept of conventional warfare and adopted a doctrine based on tactical nuclear weapons and strategic airpower.<sup>18</sup> Seeking to lower defense costs while maintaining a strong defense, "massive retaliation" with nuclear weapons seemed to offer a rational solution. The policy was not without its opponents in the defense community and the policy and its attendant programs were hardly a boon to the morale of the Army. At Leavenworth, operations under a nuclear scenario assumed priority, with conventional war scenarios taught only as a

variation. By 1960, students spent more than 600 hours on nuclear warfare in comparison to only 33 hours on unconventional war. General warfare in Europe dominated the school curriculum, clearly reflecting the major area of interest to the Eisenhower administration.<sup>19</sup>

John F. Kennedy later challenged massive retaliation doctrine as well as its European emphasis, charging that U.S. policy had not responded to the smaller insurgencies which threatened the framework of the western world. As his presidency ended, Eisenhower warned of "the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex."<sup>20</sup> Certainly more than any other American, Eisenhower knew the subject of which he spoke. While his administration's defense policy is faulted by many for its lack of vision and dimension, it must be remembered that Eisenhower's presence at the helm was in itself an extra dimension. He was the great World War II manager, the man who presided over the resolution of the Korean Conflict, and one who could assure the American people that he understood and could manage national defense. Who was more trustworthy? If his presidency was lackluster, Eisenhower still

delivered prosperity and a breathing space in which Americans could enjoy it.

It is odd perhaps that Eisenhower never revisited Ft. Leavenworth, the site of what he viewed as a turning-point in his life. He certainly had ample opportunity to do so. Besides a career that spanned over four decades from his 1926 graduation, his three-year stint as Army Chief of Staff and his two-term presidency provided ideal opportunities to visit. He did visit the Army War College located at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, for the dedication of the Eisenhower Room at the Officer's Club and the General Dwight D. Eisenhower Chair of Strategic Appraisal.<sup>21</sup> The nearness of Carlisle Barracks to his retirement farm at Gettysburg may have made it an easy trip to make. But despite numerous official and campaign appearances at Abilene and nearby Kansas City, neither Ike nor Mamie ever revisited Ft. Leavenworth. Not even the opening of Eisenhower Auditorium, capable of seating the entire student body of the Command and General Staff College, elicited a visit. Since many of the School's distinguished graduates re-visited Ft. Leavenworth later in their careers, Ike's absence in this regard is mysterious indeed. There seem to be no clues to the separation, no tangible reasons why Ike did not find a way to

revisit a place that could only have held fond memories for him - only the complete lack of any record of his appearance.

Dwight Eisenhower's year at Leavenworth was a watershed - and he saw it as such. The year was a microcosm of the themes developed earlier in his life and honed the skills and techniques which made his number one class standing possible. The year was tailor-made for Ike, and he was eminently prepared for it. His tutelage under Fox Conner provided a firm intellectual and military base. His experiments with tanks and infantry conducted with George Patton gave him practical tactical experience. His command of Camp Colt, Pennsylvania provided important experience in the training and support of a small army, as well as acquainting him with the local Gettysburg terrain - terrain later utilized in many of the Leavenworth map problems. Even his lack of service school experience had a positive effect - it raised in Ike's mind the possibility of failure and stimulated him to work the correspondence course problems. In solving the correspondence problems Ike realized, as he had in solving geometry and calculus problems in his earlier academic career, that he had a knack for the problems-solving.

By the Leavenworth year Ike also had something to prove - that he was the equal of the World War I combat theater veterans. Ike believed he had missed the great military experience of his lifetime, a feeling exacerbated by a War Department which he felt considered him persona non grata and which in fact told him he would probably fail at the School. But the Eisenhower who attended Leavenworth was a somewhat different Eisenhower then had graduated from West Point some ten years earlier. At West Point Ike saw himself as an athlete, and when the knee injury curtailed his athletic career he lacked the maturity to channel his competitive drive into academic pursuits. He could not see the connection between West Point academics and his military career. But this would soon change. His marriage to Mamie in 1916 re-focused Eisenhower's life. With marriage came responsibility, and the passing of a period of debts, card-playing, and even Ike's flirtation with Army aviation. A more mature attitude emerged with a renewed dedication to his Army service. The years which followed were years of strengthening for Ike, years applied to his development as an officer - years which could be tested at the School at Leavenworth.

The year itself was a product of Ike's dedication, competitiveness, preparation, and individuality. Patton's notes

were undoubtedly helpful, as was Ike's teaming with Leonard Gerow, an able and knowledgeable officer in his own right. In Gerow, Ike was supplied a missing ingredient in his own experience - success at an Army service school. Ike viewed his experience at Leavenworth as a reasonable one, free of mystery and mental strain, and he sought to keep it so. Rote memory was of little value, problem-solving was the true test. Ike was uniquely suited for this arrangement, where his efforts to formulate an accurate estimate of the situation and perform in a relaxed manner were key. He took advantage of the accessibility of School instructors and from them undoubtedly reinforced the official, though limited, feedback that he was doing well. His especially high achievement the last three months of the course suggest this knowledge. The nature of the congratulatory messages received upon the announcement of his number one class standing and the party in Kansas City suggest the attainment of a specific goal.

The year fostered important friendships for the Eisenhowers, took them through a year in their son John's life that had been tragic for their son Icky, and strengthened the bond between them. Mamie accomodated Ike's schedule and ensured he took time-out for meals and adequate rest. She

also indulged his sojourns to the golf course, a new found hobby which Ike would pursue throughout the remainder of his life.

While the Leavenworth success did not immediately result in a key assignment for Ike, the politics of getting into the School reinforced in his mind the role important friends could play in making such assignments possible. Just as Fox Conner had arranged his assignment to Panama, he would again manipulate the assignment process in securing Ike a key position under Pershing. These lessons were not lost on Ike, whose subsequent career assignments demonstrated his ability to find the key positions at critical times.

The Leavenworth experience was a confirming plateau for Eisenhower. A reinforcement of the lessons learned in previous assignments, under Fox Conner, and in individual preparation for the School. The course reinforced his knowledge of the tactical and logistical fundamentals of battle, preparing Ike for the larger issues of war he would soon encounter at the Army War College. Eisenhower's success at Leavenworth cast him in a new light with his contemporaries and changed the way he thought about himself. Forty years later he would call it a watershed in his life - and with good reason. The success confirmed his dedicated efforts and validated, in his own mind, his worthiness for greater responsibility.

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